

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for screening a traditional telephony call made by a calling party to a called party, the method comprising:

receiving, over a telephone network, the traditional telephony call from the calling party at a messaging service platform;

5 recording an audio message from the calling party as audio data;

transmitting the audio data from the messaging service platform to a computer of the called party while the calling party is leaving the audio message;

before the calling party finishes leaving the audio message, enabling perception by the called party of the transmitted audio data; and

10 enabling the called party to react to the traditional telephony call in response to the audio message.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising transcoding the audio data using an audio compression scheme prior to transmitting the transcoded audio data from the messaging service platform to the computer of the called party while the calling party is leaving the audio message.

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3. The method of claim 2 wherein the audio compression scheme is MPEG Layer III Audio.

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4. The method of claim 1 wherein the audio data is sent over a data network.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the voice path of the traditional telephony call only traverses the telephone network.

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6. The method of claim 1 wherein enabling the called party to react to the traditional telephony call includes generating a call screening message in response to the received traditional telephony call.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein the call screening message includes options that may be selected by the called party to react to the traditional telephony call.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein the options include sending an outbound audio message to be perceived by the calling party.

9. The method of claim 7 wherein the options include sending the traditional telephony call to a predetermined call destination.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein the predetermined call destination is a direct number of a phone of the called party.

11. The method of claim 9 wherein the predetermined call destination is a direct number that is not a direct number of a phone of the called party.

12. The method of claim 7 wherein enabling the called party to react to the traditional telephony call includes sending a call screening message to the computer of the called party if an online identity associated with the called party is online when the traditional telephony call is received at the messaging service platform.

13. The method of claim 12 wherein enabling the called party to react to the traditional telephony call includes enabling a display corresponding to the call screening message.

14. The method of claim 13 wherein enabling the called party to react to the traditional telephony call includes enabling removal of a display corresponding to the call screening message when the audio message recording completes.

15. The method of claim 12 wherein enabling the called party to react to the traditional telephony call includes enabling the options to be selected while the audio message is being recorded at the messaging service platform.

16. The method of claim 7 wherein enabling the called party to react to the traditional telephony call includes receiving an option selection from the computer of the called party.

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17. The method of claim 16 wherein enabling the called party to react to the traditional telephony call includes handling the traditional telephony call in accordance with the received option selection.

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18. The method of claim 17 wherein handling the traditional telephony call includes sending an outbound audio message to be perceived by the calling party.

19. The method of claim 17 wherein handling the traditional telephony call includes sending the traditional telephony call to a predetermined call destination.

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20. The method of claim 19 wherein the predetermined call destination is a direct number of a phone of the called party.

21. The method of claim 19 wherein the predetermined call destination is a direct number that is not a direct number of a phone of the called party.

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22. The method of claim 1 further comprising checking for online presence of the called party, wherein perception by the called party is enabled before the calling party finishes leaving the audio message conditioned on whether presence by the called party is determined to exist during the call.

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23. The method of claim 1 further comprising notifying the called party of the call details by transmission of data relating to the call from the messaging service platform to a computer of the called party.

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24. A computer system for screening a traditional telephony call made by a calling party to a called party, the computer system configured to:

receive, over a telephone network, the traditional telephony call from the calling party;

5 record an audio message from the calling party as audio data;

transmit the audio data to a computer of the called party while the calling party is leaving the audio message;

before the calling party finishes leaving the audio message, enable perception by the called party of the transmitted audio data; and

10 enable the called party to react to the traditional telephony call in response to the audio message.

25. The computer system of claim 24 wherein the computer system is further configured to transcode the audio data using an audio compression scheme prior to

15 transmitting the transcoded audio data to the computer of the called party while the calling party is leaving the audio message.

26. The computer system of claim 25 wherein the audio compression scheme is MPEG Layer III Audio.

27. The computer system of claim 24 wherein the audio data is sent over a data network.

28. The computer system of claim 24 wherein the voice path of the traditional

25 telephony call only traverses the telephone network.

29. The computer system of claim 24 wherein the computer system is configured to enable the called party to react to the traditional telephony call by generating a call screening message in response to the received traditional telephony call.

30. The computer system of claim 29 wherein the call screening message includes options that may be selected by the called party to react to the traditional telephony call.

31. The computer system of claim 30 wherein the options include sending an
5 outbound audio message to be perceived by the calling party.

32. The computer system of claim 30 wherein the options include sending the traditional telephony call to a predetermined call destination.

10 33. The computer system of claim 32 wherein the predetermined call destination is a direct number of a phone of the called party.

34. The computer system of claim 32 wherein the predetermined call destination is a direct number that is not a direct number of a phone of the called party.

15 35. The computer system of claim 30 wherein the computer system is configured to enable the called party to react to the traditional telephony call by sending a call screening message to the computer of the called party if an online identity associated with the called party is online approximately when the traditional telephony call is received.

20 36. The computer system of claim 35 wherein the computer system is configured to enable the called party to react to the traditional telephony call by enabling a display corresponding to the call screening message.

25 37. The computer system of claim 36 wherein the computer system is configured to enable the called party to react to the traditional telephony call by enabling removal of a display corresponding to the call screening message when the audio message recording completes.

38. The computer system of claim 35 wherein the computer system is configured to enable the called party to react to the traditional telephony call by enabling the options to be selected while the audio message is being recorded at the messaging service platform.

5 39. The computer system of claim 30 wherein the computer system is configured to enable the called party to react to the traditional telephony call by receiving an option selection from the computer of the called party.

10 40. The computer system of claim 39 wherein the computer system is configured to enable the called party to react to the traditional telephony call by handling the traditional telephony call in accordance with the received option selection.

15 41. The computer system of claim 40 wherein handling the traditional telephony call includes sending an outbound audio message to be perceived by the calling party.

42. The computer system of claim 40 wherein handling the traditional telephony call includes sending the traditional telephony call to a predetermined call destination.

20 43. The computer system of claim 42 wherein the predetermined call destination is a direct number of a phone of the called party.

44. The computer system of claim 42 wherein the predetermined call destination is a direct number that is not a direct number of a phone of the called party.

25 45. The computer system of claim 24 wherein the computer system is further configured to check for online presence of the called party, wherein perception by the called party is enabled before the calling party finishes leaving the audio message conditioned on whether presence by the called party is determined to exist during the call.

46. The computer system of claim 24 wherein the computer system is further configured to notify the called party of the call details by transmission of data relating to the call from the messaging service platform to a computer of the called party.

5 47. An apparatus for screening a traditional telephony call made by a calling party to a called party, the apparatus comprising:

 means for receiving, over a telephone network, the traditional telephony call from the calling party at a messaging service platform;

 means for recording an audio message from the calling party as audio data;

10 means for transmitting the audio data from the messaging service platform to a computer of the called party while the calling party is leaving the audio message;

 before the calling party finishes leaving the audio message, means for enabling perception by the called party of the transmitted audio data; and

 means for enabling the called party to react to the traditional telephony call in
15 response to the audio message.

48. The apparatus of claim 47 further comprising means for checking for online presence of the called party.

20 49. The apparatus of claim 47 further comprising means for notifying the called party of the call details by transmission of data relating to the call from the messaging service platform to a computer of the called party.